

ARBORICULTURAL IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Pontyclun Primary
School

October 2021



Barton Hyett Associates
Arboricultural Consultants

In association with



Summary table		
Site Name:	Pontyclun Primary School	
Project reference:	4371	
Site Address:	Palalwyf Ave, Pontyclun	
Nearest Postcode:	CF72 9EG	
Central Grid reference:	ST 03442 81121	
Local Planning Authority:	Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Council	
Relevant planning policies:	Adopted LDP - Area Wide Policies: AW8 - Protection & Enhancement of the Natural Environment, AW10 - Environmental Protection & Public Health	
Statutory Controls:	Tree Preservation Order	Conservation Area
	No	None
Soil Type: (Source: BGS online soils map © NERC 2021)	Superficial/Drift	Bedrock
	Till, Devensian - Diamicton	Marros Group - Mudstone, Siltstone And Sandstone
Topographical Survey:	4436-0819-04 Rev. A	
Notes:	Main arboricultural features are T1 - T6 and T8.	
Report author:	David Holmes FdSc, MArborA	
Checked by:	Paul Barton MSc, BSc (Hons), MArborA, RCarborA	
Date of issue:	15th October 2021	

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1. INSTRUCTION

- 1.1. I am David Holmes, an arboriculturist with 13 years of experience, and a professional member of the Arboricultural Association.
- 1.2. Barton Hyett Associates Ltd have been instructed by CSA on behalf of HSP to survey trees located at Pontyclun Primary School ('the site') in accordance with the recommendations of British Standard 5837:2012 'Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction - recommendations'.
- 1.3. The scope of the instruction was to inspect trees relevant to a planning application at the site and provide written advice on how they inform feasibility and design options for the site. The instruction also required an assessment of the potential impact (the arboricultural impact assessment) of the proposed development on the site's arboricultural resource to be undertaken.

2. SITE DESCRIPTION

- 2.1. The site is located just south of Pontyclun village, South Wales and consists of several single-storey school buildings, surrounded by hard-standing with associated access and parking. The A422 / Cowbridge Road runs north-east to south-west, just to the north of the site.
- 2.2. Pontyclun is approximately 7.5 miles south-west of Pontypridd and 10.5 miles north-west of Cardiff.
- 2.3. The site covers approximately 1.2 hectares. The site boundaries north and south are enclosed by adjoining residential properties, an allotment site to the east and the Heol-Y-Felin to the west. The surrounding area is made up of residential properties, with a library to the front of the school, Pontyclun Park to the west of the site and an athletic club to the north-east of the site.
- 2.4. The site is relatively flat, being 47m above mean sea level.
- 2.5. Vehicular and pedestrian access into the site is facilitated by gated access directly from Heol-Y-Felin.

3. TREE SURVEY FINDINGS

- 3.1. A total of 12 trees and 2 groups were surveyed. These are summarised in terms of their quality in accordance with the recommendations of BS5837 below, and shown in more detail on the Tree Survey and Constraints Plan (Section 2) and within the Tree Survey Schedule (Section 3).

	Total	A - High quality trees whose retention is most desirable.	B - Moderate quality trees whose retention is desirable.	C - Low quality trees which could be retained but should not significantly constrain the proposal.	U - Very poor quality trees that should be removed unless they have high conservation value.
Trees	12	-	4	7	1
Groups	2	-	-	2	-
Total	14	-	4	9	1

Table 1: Summary of arboricultural features of each BS5837 quality category

4. KEY ARBORICULTURAL FEATURES

- 4.1. The most prominent tree on the site is the mature pine T5 near the north boundary.
- 4.2. Trees T1-T8 and G1 provide a visually interesting aspect to the rear of the site. This also appears to be the most utilised grassed area within the school boundary.

5. DEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL

- 5.1. The development proposal is to construct a new school building in the south-west part of the site. The existing building will then be demolished and the surrounding site reconfigured. The library to the front of the site is to be retained. The proposed site layout is shown on the proposed site plan entitled 'Landscape Illustrative Masterplan', drawing No: RH0201-ALA-00-XX-DR-L-00005 S3 Rev. P04, dated 25-05-2021 (as amended and submitted).

6. IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 6.1. A total of 4 individual trees and 1 group of trees are proposed to be removed. These removals are summarised by quality category in the table below and shown on the Tree Retention and Removal Plan in Section 3.

	Total	A - High quality trees whose retention is most desirable.	B - Moderate quality trees whose retention is desirable.	C - Low quality trees which could be retained but should not significantly constrain the proposal.	U - Very poor quality trees that should be removed unless they have high conservation value.
Trees	5	-	-	T9, T10, T11, T12	T7
Groups	1	-	-	G2	-
Total	6	-	-	5	1

Table 2: summary of proposed removals of each BS5837 quality category

- 6.2. The cherry tree T7 is in a poor condition and recorded as category U. This tree should be removed regardless of whether the development goes ahead or not as part of good arboricultural management of the site.
- 6.3. The trees proposed for removal are low-quality category C trees which should not be allowed to constrain the development. T9 and T10 could possibly have been retained but it is recommended that they are removed to favour new tree planting as part of the new landscape scheme in this part of the site.
- 6.4. A new area of hard-surfacing close to the mature Norway maple T8 would require excavations close to the trunk which would cause significant harm to the root system so this tree will need to be removed.

- 6.5. During the demolition phase it is strongly advised that the 'top-down, pull-back' method of demolition is used where masonry is toppled inwards of the building footprint. The foliage of the retained trees should be rinsed off at the end of each working day to prevent excessive dust build-up.
- 6.6. Underground utilities should be designed to run outside of the root protection areas (RPAs) of retained trees where possible and from the supplied layout this appears possible. Should utilities need to be installed near, or within RPAs, the project arboriculturist should be consulted and an appropriate installation method statement prepared.
- 6.7. As there is no proposed construction within the RPAs of retained trees, there is no requirement for specialist construction techniques to be used when installing the foundations.
- 6.8. The existing site access/egress and hard-standing are to be used, which minimises the disruption within the site. Where existing metalled surfaces are retained, removing and replacing the wearing surface only without disturbing the sub-layers is feasible. The alteration of levels is to be avoided.
- 6.9. New trees and hedgerows are shown on the layout plan, being distributed more consistently across the site which will enhance the development and increase biodiversity.
- 6.10. On a site with spatial constraints such as this, fastigate variety trees, which have a columnar form are ideal for confined planting spaces. The initial purchase price will be more than the common variety, however, the cost is offset in the mid to long-term as there will be less potential for future nuisance issues e.g. pruning for clearance around access points or above parking spaces
- 6.11. The proposal is feasible from an arboricultural perspective, and if carefully implemented according to an approved Arboricultural Method Statement there would be no, or only a low, potential negative impact on the retained trees. A combined draft Tree Retention and Removal and Tree Protection Plan is included in Section 3.

7. HEADS OF TERMS FOR AN ARBORICULTURAL METHOD STATEMENT (AMS)

- 7.1. BS5837:2012 (Figure 1) recommends that detailed/technical design of tree protection and arboricultural methodologies should be resolved and finalised following on from the approval of the feasibility of a scheme by the Local Planning Authority.
- 7.2. Annex B and Table B.1 of BS5837:2012, an informative, advises that Arboricultural Method Statement heads of terms are a sufficient level of information in order to deliver tree-related information into the planning system. The table also advises that a detailed Arboricultural Method Statement might reasonably be required as a 'reserved matter' or planning condition.
- 7.3. In relation to the site, it is anticipated that arboricultural working methods are likely to be quite straightforward. A brief summary of the principles of tree protection on development sites is included in Section 7. A draft, 'heads of terms' for an Arboricultural Method Statement is set out below:
 - Project arboriculturist – schedule of monitoring and supervision to be agreed with the applicant and LPA
 - Pre commencement site meeting - project arboriculturist to brief the main contractor on tree protection requirements and ensure copies of the tree protection plan have been distributed

- Tree removals and facilitation pruning - as per the approved tree retention/removal plans
- Erection of tree protection barriers and temporary ground protection as may be required - as per the approved Tree Protection plan
- Main construction phase - all tree protection barriers to remain in place and intact at all times
- Removal of tree protection barriers - only to occur once all construction and demolition have been completed and signed off by the project arboriculturist
- Final landscaping including tree planting.

8. RECOMMENDATION AND SUMMARY

- 8.1. Subject to the implementation of the advice contained within this report the proposed development is acceptable from an arboricultural perspective. The loss of trees can be readily mitigated and the retained trees can be adequately protected during construction activities to sustain their health and longevity.
- 8.2. There is ample opportunity across the site to establish new trees to both compensate for tree removals and to enhance the site's arboricultural value. Attention is once again drawn to the use of fastigate variety trees to reduce potential future nuisance issues.
- 8.3. An Arboricultural Method Statement and finalised Tree Protection Plan will need to be produced. Where the feasibility of a scheme has been agreed by the Local Planning Authority, this detail can be agreed and submitted at a later date as part of a reserved matters application or pre-commencement planning condition (by agreement with the applicant).



David Holmes, *FdSc, MArborA*
Arboriculturist

INDIVIDUAL TREES

Ref	Species	On/off site	Top Height (m)	No. of Stems	Est diam?	Calc. / Actual Stem Dia. (mm)	Crown radii (m) N-E-S-W	Avg. low crown height (m)	1st branch ht (m)	1st branch dir.	Life Stage	Special importance	General Observations	Health & vitality	Structural condition	Estimated Remaining Contribution (Years)	BS5837 Category	RPA Radius (m)	RPA m ²
T1	Downy birch	On	13.5	2	#	570	5.5-6.0-5.0-5.0	1.5	2	S	M	None	Forks @1m, reactionary growth around union, minor crossing branches	Good	Good	20+	B1	6.8	147
T2	Wild cherry	On	11.0	1	-	410	6.0-6.0-5.5-6.0	2.0	1.5	S	EM	None	Typical for age & species	Good	Good	20+	B1	4.9	76
T3	Weeping cherry	On	2.5	1	-	160	1.5-1.0-0.5-1.0	0.0	1	S	SM	None	Commemorative tree, minor crossing branches	Good	Good	20+	C1	2.0	12
T4	Silver birch	On	14.0	1	-	270	3.0-3.0-2.5-2.0	2.5	3	N	SM	None	Strong central leader	Good	Good	40+	B1	3.2	33
T5	Black pine	On	19.0	1	-	770	6.0-5.0-6.0-5.0	3.0	6	S	M	None	Forks @ 8m, old wound on north of stem, tallest tree on site	Good	Good	20+	B1	9.2	268
T6	Holly	On	5.0	1	#	300	1.5-2.5-3.0-3.0	0.5	2	E	EM	None	Poor form due to damaged main leader, severed ivy to main stem	Good	Fair	20+	C1	3.6	41
T7	Cherry	On	8.0	1	-	220	4.0-3.0-2.0-4.0	2.5	3	S	SM	None	Cavity in trunk @1m to east of stem, sparse crown	Poor	Poor	<10	U	2.6	22
T8	Norway Maple	On	10.0	3	-	630	4.5-8.0-7.0-6.0	1.5	2	S	M	None	Included unions @ 0.5m & @ 1m east, likely to become progressively worse	Good	Poor	10+	C1	7.6	180
T9	Norway spruce	On	9.0	1	#	200	2.5-2.0-2.0-2.5	0.5	1	N	SM	None	Crown lifted leaving pruning-pegs, close to corner of classroom, potential to become large	Good	Good	10+	C1	2.4	18
T10	Cherry	On	8.0	1	-	220	3.0-3.0-2.5-2.5	1.0	1	N	SM	None	Compact crown, visible roots, included union to east	Good	Fair	10+	C1	2.6	22
T11	Ash	On	7.0	1	-	230	4.0-3.5-3.0-3.0	2.0	2	E		None	Redundant stake	Good	Good	20+	C1	2.8	24
T12	Norway Maple	On	6.0	1	-	250	4.0-4.0-3.0-2.0	2.0	2.5	E	SM	None	Non-progressive lean, failed union on east, redundant stake	Good	Fair	20+	C1	3.0	28

CLIENT: HSP

SURVEY DATE: 28/04/2021

GROUPS OF TREES

Ref	Species	On/off site	Height range (m)	No. of trees	Est diam?	Max stem diam (mm)	Av. Crown radius (m)	Avg. low crown height (m)	Life Stage	Special importance	General Observations	Health & vitality	Structural condition	Estimated Remaining Contribution (Years)	BS5837 Category	RPA Radius (m)
G1	Lawson's Cypress	On	10-12	7	-	600.0	4	2.0	EM	None	Topped @ approximately 9m, southernmost tree has included union, east crown overhangs parking spaces, northern crown overhangs classroom	Good	Poor	20+	C2	7.2
G2	Horse Chestnut, Malus	On	2-6	3	-	160.0	3	1.0	Y	None	Small trees, low branches rubbing on shipping container	Good	Fair	10+	C2	2.0



IMAGE 1: View looking south-east toward T1 - T8 (T5 and T8 labelled).



IMAGE 2: View looking north-west toward T8 and G1.



IMAGE 3: Included union of T8 (looking north-east).



IMAGE 4: View of the topped stems with G1.



IMAGE 5: View looking south at T10.



IMAGE 6: View looking south at T11 and T12.

- The tree survey was carried out with reference to the methodology set out in BS5837:2012 'Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction – Recommendations'.
- Trees were surveyed individually or as groups where it was considered that they had grown together to form cohesive arboricultural features either aerodynamically (trees that provide companion shelter), visually (e.g. avenues or screens) or culturally (including for biodiversity). However, where it was considered that there was an arboricultural need to differentiate between attributes trees within groups and / or woodlands were also surveyed as individuals.
- The full tree survey findings are recorded in the following tree survey schedule.
- Within the tree survey schedule, each surveyed TREE (T), GROUP (G), HEDGEROW (H), WOODLAND (W) or SHRUB MASS on or adjacent to the site is given a reference number which refers to its position on the tree survey and constraints plan.
- TREE SPECIES are listed by common name.

The **DIMENSIONS** taken are:

- STEM-No. Indicates the number of main stems (i.e. whether the trunk divides at or below 1.5m; (Used in the calculation of RPA.) "m-s" = Multi-stemmed.
- STEM DIAMETER (measured in millimetres), obtained from the girth measured at approx. 1.5m. For trees with 2 to 5 sub-stems a notional figure is derived from the sum of their cross-sectional areas. For multi-stemmed trees, the notional diameter may be estimated on the basis of the average stem size x the number of stems. (A notional diameter may be estimated where measurement is not possible.)
- HEIGHT (measured in metres), recorded to the nearest half metre for dimensions up to 10m and to the nearest whole metre for dimensions over 10m.
- The CROWN SPREAD, taken at the four cardinal points to derive an accurate representation of the tree crown, recorded up to the nearest half metre for dimensions up to 10m and to up the nearest whole metre for dimensions over 10m.
- CROWN CLEARANCES are expressed both as existing height above ground level of first significant branch along with its direction of growth (e.g. 2.5m-N), and also in terms of the overall crown e.g. the average height of the crown above ground level. Measurements are recorded to the nearest half metre for dimensions up to 10m and to the nearest whole metre for dimensions over 10m.
- ESTIMATES. Where any measurement has had to be estimated, due to inaccessibility for example, this is indicated by a "#" suffix to the measurement as shown in the tree survey schedule.

LIFE STAGE is defined as follows:

- Y Young: Normally stake dependent, establishing trees. Should be growing fast, usually primarily increasing in height more than spread but as yet making limited impact upon the landscape.
- SM Semi-mature: Established young trees, normally of good vigour and still increasing in height but beginning to spread laterally. Beginning to make an impact upon the local landscape and environment. Semi-Mature (still capable of being transplanted without preparation, up to 30cm girth and not yet sexually mature).

- EM Early-mature: Not yet having reached 75% of expected mature size. Established young trees, normally of good vigour and still increasing in height but beginning to spread laterally. Beginning to make an impact upon the local landscape and environment.
- M Mature: Well-established trees, still growing with some vigour but tending to fill out and increase spread. Bark may be beginning to crack and fissure. In the middle half of their safe, useful life expectancies.
- LM Late-Mature: In full maturity but possibly beyond mature and in a state of natural decline). Still retaining some vigour but any growth is slowing.
- A Ancient: A tree that has passed beyond maturity and is old/aged compared with other trees of the same species. Typically having a very wide trunk and a small canopy.

PHYSIOLOGICAL CONDITION (HEALTH & VITALITY):

Essentially a snapshot of the general health of the tree based upon its general appearance, it's apparent vigour and the presence or absence of symptoms associated with poor health, physiological stress etc. (Fungal infections may be recorded here but decay giving rise to structural weakness would be recorded under 'Structural Condition' – see next parameter):

- Good: No significant health issues.
- Fair: Indications of slight stress or minor disease (e.g. the presence of minor dieback/deadwood or of epicormic shoot growth).
- Poor: Significant stress or disease noted; larger areas of dieback than above.
- Dead: (or Moribund).

STRUCTURAL CONDITION:

Defects affecting the structural stability of the tree including decay, significant dead wood, root-plate instability or significant damage to structural roots, weak forks (e.g. those where bark is included between the members) etc.

Classified as:

- Good: No obvious structural defects: basically sound.
- Fair: Minor, potential or incipient defects.
- Poor: Significant defect(s) likely to lead to actual failure in the medium to long-term.
- Dead: (or Moribund).

ESTIMATED REMAINING CONTRIBUTION:

An estimate of the length of time in years that a tree might be expected to continue to make a useful contribution to the locality at an acceptable level of risk (based on an assumption of continued routine maintenance):

- Less than 10 years
- 10+ years
- 20+ years
- 40+ years

SPECIAL IMPORTANCE:

Trees that are particularly notable as high value trees such as ancient trees/woodland or veteran trees. Such trees may be regarded as the principal arboricultural features of a site and pose a significant constraint to potential development.

An *ancient* tree is one that has passed beyond maturity and is very old compared with other trees of the same species. Very few trees reach the ancient life-stage.

Veteran trees are often very old but not necessarily so; they may be regarded as ‘survivors’ that have developed some of the characteristic features of an ancient tree but have not necessarily lived as long. All ancient trees are veterans but not all veteran trees are ancient.

An ancient woodland is an area that has been wooded continuously since at least 1600 AD. It includes ancient semi-natural woodland (ASNW), plantations on ancient woodland sites (PAWS) and ancient replanted woodland (ARW)

QUALITY CATEGORY:

Trees are classed as category U, A, B or C, based on criteria given in BS5837:2012; summary definitions as follows (see BS5837 for further details). Categories A, B and C are further characterised by the use of sub-categories, which attempt to identify what aspect of the tree is the main source of its perceived value, These are:

- (1) arboricultural qualities
- (2) landscape qualities, and
- (3) cultural, historic or ecological/conservation qualities.

Examples of these qualities for each of the three categories are given below, although these are indicative only.

Note: This is NOT a health and safety classification; the classification does not take into account any requirement for remedial tree care or ongoing maintenance apart from that which may affect the trees’ general suitability for retention.

CATEGORY A: HIGH QUALITY:

Trees or groups whose retention should be given a particularly high priority within the design process. Normally with an expected useful life expectancy of at least 40 years.

- A1: Notably fine specimens; rare or unusual specimens; essential component trees within groups, semi-formal or formal plantings (e.g. dominant trees within an avenue etc.).
- A2: Trees, groups or woodlands of particular visual importance as landscape features.
- A3: Trees, groups or woodlands of particular significance by virtue of their conservation, historical, commemorative or other value (e.g. veteran trees or wood pasture.)

CATEGORY B: MODERATE QUALITY:

Trees or groups of some importance with a likely useful life expectancy in excess of 20 years. Their retention would be desirable; selective removal of certain individuals may be acceptable but only after full consideration of all alternative courses of action.

- B1: Fair quality but not exceptional; good specimens showing some impairment (e.g. remediable defects, minor storm damage or poor past management.)
- B2: Acceptable trees situated such as to have little visual impact within the wider locality. Also numbers of trees, perhaps in groups or woodlands, whose value as landscape features is greater collectively than would warrant as individuals (such that the selective removal of an individual would not impact greatly upon the trees’ overall, collective value).
- B3: Trees, groups or woodlands with clearly identifiable conservation or other cultural benefits.

CATEGORY C: LOW QUALITY:

Trees or groups of rather low quality, although potentially capable of retention for at least approx. 10 years. Also small trees with stems below 15cm diameter.

Potentially retainable, but not of sufficient value to be regarded as a significant planning constraint.

- C1: Unremarkable trees of very limited merit or of significantly impaired condition.
- C2: Trees offering only low or short-term landscape benefits; also secondary specimens within groups or woodlands whose loss would not significantly diminish their landscape value.
- C3: Trees with extremely limited conservation or other cultural benefit.

CATEGORY U:

Trees likely to prove to be unsuitable for retention for longer than 10 years should any significant increase in site usage arise as a result of development.

E.g. dead or moribund trees; those at risk of collapse or in terminal decline; trees that will be left unstable by other essential works such as the removal of nearby category U trees; trees infected by pathogens that could materially affect other trees; low quality trees that are suppressing better specimens.

(Category U trees may have conservation values that it might be desirable to preserve. This category may also include trees that should be removed irrespective of any development proposals.)

ROOT PROTECTION AREA (RPA):

These are normally represented as a circle centred on the base of each tree stem with a radius of 12 times stem diameter, measured at 1.5m above ground level. The shape of the RPA may be altered where site conditions dictate that there are sound reasons to do so.

VETERAN OR ANCIENT TREE BUFFER (VTB/ATB)

In line with the Standing Advice produced by the Forestry Commission and Natural England this is a buffer zone (in metres) around an ancient or veteran tree that should be at least 15 times larger than the diameter of the tree. The buffer zone should be 5m from the edge of the tree’s canopy if that area is larger than 15 times the tree’s stem diameter.

ANCIENT WOODLAND BUFFER (FOR ASNW, PAWS OR ARW)

In line with the Standing Advice produced by the Forestry Commission and Natural England this is a buffer zone of at least 15 metres to avoid root damage. Where assessment shows other impacts are likely to extend beyond this distance, a larger buffer zone may be required.

THE IMPORTANCE OF TREES

Wider benefits:

There is a growing body of evidence that trees bring a wide range of benefits to the places people live.

Some *Economic* benefits of trees include:

- Trees can increase property values
- As trees grow larger, the lift they give to property values grows proportionately
- They can improve the environmental performance of buildings by reducing heating and cooling costs, thereby cutting bills
- Mature landscapes with trees can be worth more as development sites
- Trees create a positive perception of a place for potential property buyers
- Urban trees improve the health of local populations, reducing healthcare costs

Some *Social* benefits of trees include:

- Trees help create a sense of place and local identity
- They benefit communities by increasing pride in the local area
- They can create focal points and landmarks
- They have a positive impact on people's physical and mental health
- They can have a positive impact on crime reduction

Some *Environmental* benefits of trees include:

- Urban trees reduce the 'urban heat island effect' of localised temperature extremes
- They provide shade, making streets and buildings cooler in summer
- They help remove dust and particulates from the air
- They help to reduce traffic noise by absorbing and deflecting sound
- They help to reduce wind speeds
- By providing food and shelter for wildlife, they help increase biodiversity
- They can reduce the effects of flash flooding by slowing the rate at which rainfall reaches the ground
- They can help remediate contaminated soil

On new development sites:

Trees bring many benefits to new development. Where retained successfully they can form important and sustainable elements of green infrastructure, contribute to urban cooling and reduce energy demands in buildings. Their importance is acknowledged in relation to adaptation to the effects of climate change. Other benefits brought by trees include:

- Increasing property values
- Visual amenity
- Softening, complementing and adding maturity to built form
- Displaying seasonal change
- Increasing wildlife opportunities in built-up areas
- Contributing to screening and shade
- Reducing wind speed and turbulence

NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY

The National Planning Policy Framework 2021 (NPPF paragraph 180) states that, when determining planning applications, local planning authorities should apply the following principle:

c) 'development resulting in the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats (such as ancient woodland and ancient or veteran trees) should be refused, unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and a suitable compensation strategy exists.'

In this respect the following definitions apply:

'Ancient woodland: An area that has been wooded continuously since at least 1600 AD. It includes ancient semi-natural woodland and plantations on ancient woodland sites (PAWS)', and

'Ancient or veteran tree: A tree which, because of its age, size and condition, is of exceptional biodiversity, cultural or heritage value. All ancient trees are veteran trees. Not all veteran trees are old enough to be ancient, but are old relative to other trees of the same species. Very few trees of any species reach the ancient life-stage.'

Note: Further information from the National Planning Policy Guidance Suite and Standing Advice is provided in the design guidance section.

Other paragraphs of the NPPF 2021 of relevance to this report are:

Paragraph 131: *'Trees make an important contribution to the character and quality of urban environments, and can also help mitigate and adapt to climate change. Planning policies and decisions should ensure that new streets are tree-lined, that opportunities are taken to incorporate trees elsewhere in developments (such as parks and community orchards), that appropriate measures are in place to secure the long-term maintenance of newly-planted trees, and that existing trees are retained wherever possible. Applicants and local planning authorities should work with highways officers and tree officers to ensure that the right trees are planted in the right places, and solutions are found that are compatible with highways standards and the needs of different users.'*

Paragraph 174: *'Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:*

b) recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland.'

STATUTORY CONTROLS

Statutory tree protection

Works to trees which are covered by Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) or are within a Conservation Area (CA) require permission or consent from the Local Planning Authority. Where information is available on any Statutory designations such as this they are identified within the summary table in Section 1 and on the Tree Survey and Constraints Plan at Section 2.

Notwithstanding specific exceptions and in general terms, a TPO prevents the cutting down, uprooting, topping, lopping, wilful damage or wilful destruction of protected trees or woodlands without the prior written consent of the LPA.

Penalties for contravention of a TPO tend to reflect the extent of damage caused but can, in the event of a tree being destroyed, result in a fine of up to £20,000 if convicted in a Magistrates' Court, or an unlimited fine if the matter is determined by the Crown Court.

Similarly, and again notwithstanding specific exceptions, it is an offence to carry out any works to a tree in a Conservation Area with a trunk diameter greater than 75mm diameter at 1.5 height without having first provided the LPA with 6 weeks written notification of intent to carry out the works.

On many non-residential sites (excluding specific exemptions) there is also a statutory restriction relating to tree felling that relates to quantities of timber that can be removed within set time periods. In basic

terms, it is an offence to remove more than 5 cubic metres of timber in any one calendar quarter without having first obtained a felling licence from the Forestry Commission.

Any proposed tree works that are planned to be carried out on site must be carried out in accordance with the statutory controls outlined.

Statutory Wildlife Protection

Although preliminary visual checks from ground level of likely wildlife habitats are made at the time of surveying, detailed ecological assessments of wildlife habitats are not made by the arboriculturist and fall outside of the scope for this report.

Trees which contain holes, splits, cracks and cavities could potentially provide a habitat for protected species such as bats in addition to birds and small mammals. It is advised that in some instances specialist ecological advice may be required. This may result in tree works being carried out following a detailed climbing inspection to the tree to ensure that protected species or their nests/roosts are not disturbed. If any are found, the site manager, site owner or consulting arboriculturist should be informed and appropriate action taken as recommended by the appointed Ecologist or the relevant Statutory Nature Conservation Organisation (SNCO): Natural England, Scottish Natural Heritage or Natural Resources Wales.

It is advised that tree/hedgerow works are carried out with the understanding that birds will generally nest in trees, hedges and shrubs between March and August. This time period only provides an indication of likely nesting times and as such diligence is required when undertaking tree works at all times.

Irrespective of the time of year and other than any actions approved under General Licence, it is an offence to intentionally kill, injure or take any wild bird or to intentionally take, damage or destroy the nest or eggs of any wild bird. Ideally, tree operations should be avoided during the likely bird nesting period. However, any tree works should always only be carried out following a preliminary visual check of the vegetation.

For information, the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 (as amended), The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 (as amended) and the Conservation of Habitat and Species Regulations 2010, form the basis of the statutory legislation for flora and fauna in England and Wales. A different legislative framework applies in Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Any proposed tree works that are planned to be carried out on site must be carried out in accordance with any relevant statutory controls, outlined above.

DESIGN GUIDANCE

Approach

The approach adopts the guidelines set out in the British Standard BS 5837:2012 Trees in relation to design, demolition and construction – Recommendations. The process is broken down to coordinate with the key elements within both the RIBA Plan of Work (2013) and British Standard 5837:2012 as set out in the table below:

Information Stage	RIBA Stage	BS5837:2012
Stage A – Tree Survey	2: Concept	4: Feasibility
Stage B – Arboricultural Impact Assessment	3: Developed design	5: Proposals
Stage C – Arboricultural Method Statement	4: Technical design	6: Technical Design
Stage D – Arboricultural Site Supervision	5: Construction	7: Demolition and construction

A hierarchical approach is adopted in order to achieve optimum use of the site and location of built structures. This is set out below:

Avoid

The starting point of Site layout design should be to avoid the RPA of retained trees and provide suitable clearance from above ground constraints [tree canopies]. Where possible building lines should be at least 2m outside the RPA to provide working space for construction. However, protection measures can be taken if such clearance is not achievable.

Mitigate

Where intrusion within the RPA is unavoidable then its impact on the tree can be mitigated by specialist measures:

Foundations that avoid trenching e.g. screw piles, suspended floor slabs or casting at ground level for lightweight structures such as bin and cycle stores.

Limited use may be made for parking, drives or hard surfaces within the root protection areas, subject to advice from a qualified arboriculturist. Cellular confinement systems that enable hard surfaces to be built above existing soil levels are acceptable methods subject to site-specific soil conditions.

Service runs that cannot be routed outside the RPA(s) can be installed by, for example, thrust boring, directional drilling, air excavation or hand digging. These operations often require supervision by the project arboriculturist.

Compensate

Replacement planting can ensure the continuity of tree cover where tree removal is unavoidable or desirable. Off-site provision may be considered in some circumstances but this will require negotiation with the local planning authority.

Considerations:

For proposed residential developments, consideration must be given to numerous factors future tree growth and orientation.

Tree constraints

Root Protection Areas:

With reference to BS5837:2012, a root protection area (RPA) is defined as “a layout design tool indicating the minimum area around a tree deemed to contain sufficient roots and rooting volume to maintain the tree’s viability, and where the protection of the roots and soil structure should be treated as a priority”. **“The default position [when considering design layout in relation to RPAs] should be that structures are located outside the RPAs of trees to be retained”.**

BS5837:2012 states (4.6.2) that, “where pre-existing site conditions or other factors indicate that rooting has occurred asymmetrically, a polygon of equivalent area should be produced.” The BS goes on to state that, “modifications to the shape of the RPA should reflect a soundly based arboricultural assessment of likely root distribution,” and that any deviation from the original circular plot should take into account:

- Morphology and disposition of roots;
- topography and drainage;
- soil type and structure;
- the likely tolerance of the tree to root damage/disturbance.

Additional buffer zones beyond the RPA:

The following text is taken from the Standing Advice produced by the Forestry Commission and Natural England as included in the National Planning Policy Guidance:

'A buffer zone's purpose is to protect ancient woodland and individual ancient or veteran trees. The size and type of buffer zone should vary depending on the scale, type and impact of the development'.

Ancient woodland buffer:

'For ancient woodlands, you should have a buffer zone of at least 15 metres to avoid root damage. Where assessment shows other impacts are likely to extend beyond this distance, you're likely to need a larger buffer zone. For example, the effect of air pollution from development that results in a significant increase in traffic'.

Ancient and veteran tree buffer:

'A buffer zone around an ancient or veteran tree should be at least 15 times larger than the diameter of the tree. The buffer zone should be 5m from the edge of the tree's canopy if that area is larger than 15 times the tree's diameter'.

Above ground:

Above ground constraints posed by trees describe the capacity for trees to have an overbearing or dominating effect on new developments; usually post occupancy. Typical above ground constraints include a number or combination of inconveniences including shading, branch spread, movement of trees during strong winds and so on. If not adequately considered, above ground constraints can lead to repeated requests to fell or heavily prune retained and protected trees.

Shade:

Adverse shading and blocked views from windows raise concerns for incoming residents, which may lead to pressure to fell or remove trees in the future. Wherever possible it is advisable to arrange fenestration away from tree canopies to lessen the conflict, or increase window size to accommodate ambient light.

Conversely, appropriate designed development can use existing or new trees to create necessary and welcome shade and screening.

As part of the adopted approach the above considerations and constraints are assessed cumulatively in order to provide clear and site-specific advice on the areas of a site most suitable for the location of development.

Dependent on the site and nature of the proposed development, the Tree Survey and Constraints Plans may show the following:

Recommended Developable area - an advisory area defined in order to minimise arboricultural impacts using standard approaches to construction. Restricting proposed development to this area will limit the risk of harm to retained trees and of the Local Planning Authority objecting to the proposed development. It may be possible to propose development outside of this area but specific 'low impact' construction techniques may be needed recommended.

Recommended Buffer to development - similar to the Recommended Developable Area but defined as a line marking a suitable buffer to retained trees. More commonly used on large sites or sites where the presence of trees is localised.

Tree Opportunities

Depending on the scale of developments existing trees can often provide opportunities to enhance the existing arboricultural resource of a site by bringing it into good management or by putting in place remedial measures e.g. soil amelioration.

Appropriately designed new tree planting is extremely important in maintaining healthy and sustainable tree populations. For the reasons highlighted, new trees can bring many benefits to new developments. It is critical to the establishment of new tree planting that the locations, species and specification of new trees is appropriate. Subsequently the sourcing of high-quality stock, suitable planting and the provision of post planting maintenance are essential to allow new trees to establish and to allow them to mature.

HOW TREE DAMAGE CAN OCCUR

Above the ground

Damage can occur as a result of knocks and scuffs, breakages of branches and/or tree trunks. This is often but not always associated with machine operations, groundworks excavations, tele handlers, high sided vehicles and crane use. Other forms of above ground damage include fixings to trunk and unauthorised cutting back of branches. Wounds will harm a tree's health and shorten its life by letting in disease-causing organisms.

Below the ground

It is often not appreciated that the majority of most tree roots are generally located within the top 600mm of the ground. On this basis it needs to be understood that damage to roots can occur in three ways:

- Root severance can occur as a result of, for example, soil stripping during site clearance or excavations.
- Root dieback and death can result from compaction of the soil. Compaction can occur as a result of vehicle weight, weight of stored materials or increased pedestrian access. Compaction crushes out soil pore space and prevents tree respiration from occurring (respiration requires gas exchange between the ground and the atmosphere). Compacted soil is denser and therefore inhibits/prevents any further new root growth.
- Pollution of the soil with chemicals such as oil or cement washings can destroy the soil environment, making it inhospitable for the tree cause causing it stress.

The effects of these impacts can be disfiguring to a tree's appearance and also weaken a tree making it more liable to attack by pest and diseases. In addition, root damage or death results in corresponding decline above the ground with dieback occurring within the tree crown.

The effects of damage to trees generally take some time to become fully apparent. In many cases, damaged trees decline slowly after the completion of a new development, until they eventually need to be removed due to ill health.

Tree protection barriers and load distributing 'no-dig' paths are specified in order to prevent soil compaction from taking place.

GENERAL SITE RULES FOR TREE PROTECTION

Do not independently carry out any activity that is at odds with the site scheme of tree protection. This is contained within an approved Arboricultural Method Statement (AMS) and accompanying Tree Protection Plan.

In simple terms: do not carry out any work within any Construction Exclusion Zone (CEZ) without prior liaison with the Project Arboriculturist and written authorisation from the Local Planning Authority.

Within the CEZ:

- No mixing of cement
- No soil/turf stripping, raising/lowering of ground levels (unless advised), deposit or excavation of soil or rubble
- No excavations for services or installation of services
- No storage of materials, machinery fuel, chemicals or other materials of any other description
- No parking/use of tracked or wheeled machinery
- No siting of temporary structures including hard standing areas, portaloos, site huts
- No lighting of fires or disposal of liquids
- Fires on site should be avoided if possible. Where they are unavoidable, they must not be lit in a position where heat could damage foliage or branches. Fires must be a minimum of 20m from the trunk of any retained tree or the centre line of any hedgerow to be retained
- No signs, cables, fixtures or fittings of any other description shall be attached to any part of a retained tree